

If a Black . . . can make it on Okinawa and Guadalcanal . . . he can make it in baseball." But the Major League owners disagreed and voted against integration 15-to-1.

In 1945, Brooklyn Dodgers owner Branch Rickey signed a shortstop from the Kansas City Monarchs to play for the Dodgers' farm club. As a lieutenant in the Army, Jack Roosevelt Robinson risked a court-martial by refusing to sit in the back of a military bus. In 1947, he was called up to play for the Dodgers. Baseball's color line was finally erased.

Soon after, the Negro Leagues began to falter financially as they lost more and more of their best players to the majors. The league folded in 1960.

Before the vote this week, only 18 of the Negro League's more than 2,600 players had been voted into the Hall of Fame.

Among those pushing for recognition of other deserving Negro Leaguers was former Baseball Commissioner Fay Vincent. Vincent's interest in Negro Leagues ball was heightened after he met Alfred "Slick" Surratt, a Negro Leaguer who served in World War II and was wounded at the Battle of Guadalcanal, and then barred from playing Major League baseball when he returned home.

In 1991, at the urging of former St. Louis Cardinals catcher and baseball broadcaster Joe Garagiola, Vincent arranged a trip to Cooperstown for 75 Negro League players. At a formal dinner, he apologized to the players for the way baseball had snubbed them. He later told a reporter from USA Today: "I really thought I was repeating an old line, but it turned out that it was the first time that someone—from Major League Baseball—had done that." When he handed out a commemorative medallion of the event, he said, "about a third of [the players] were crying."

In 2000, Major League Baseball commissioned a \$250,000 study of African-American players from 1860 to 1960. The result is the most thorough statistical record of the Negro Leagues ever compiled. It includes statistics culled from Black-owned newspapers as well as stats from games that matched barnstorming White players—including Babe Ruth and Dizzy Dean—against Negro Leaguers.

The league then appointed a special commission of 12 historians and scholars to sift through the record and select players who should be considered for the Hall of Fame. The first list included 39 names. From those 39 players, the committee this week selected the 17 new Hall of Famers.

It wasn't just on the field that Negro Leagues Baseball differed from White baseball. At Major League games Black and White fans were separated by chicken-wire fences—"one of the powerful symbols of racism," in Buck O'Neil's words. But during Negro League games, Blacks and Whites sat side by side.

In July, when the Hall of Fame's class of 2006 is formally inducted, more of the legends of Black baseball will finally take their rightful place at Cooperstown, to be honored side by side with the rest of the best who ever played America's game. As Buck O'Neil said, "America is growing."

We congratulate the families of all of the new Hall of Famers, and we remain hopeful that Buck O'Neil and Minnie Minoso will soon join them in Cooperstown.

I yield the floor.

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ADJOURNMENT UNTIL 9:30 A.M.  
TOMORROW

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate is adjourned until 9:30 a.m. tomorrow.

Thereupon, the Senate, at 6:36 p.m., adjourned until Thursday, March 2, 2006, at 9:30 a.m.